

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L THESSALONIKI 0751

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

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SUBJECT: ELECTIONS IN NORTHERN GREECE

REF: (A) THESSALONIKI 744, (B) THESSALONIKI 705

1. SUMMARY: RETURNS FROM NORTHERN GREEK PRECINCTS FOLLOW NATIONAL PATTERN OF NEW DEMOCRACY (ND) LANDSLIDE, BASED APPROX 95 PERCENT OF VOTE ANNOUNCED THUS FAR. THROUGH "REINFORCED PROPORTIONAL SYSTEM", ND EXPECTED TO RECEIVE AT LEAST 66 PERCENT OF SEATS FROM MACEDONIA AND THRACE. POLLING TOOK PLACE IN RELAXED BUT FESTIVE ATMOSPHERE WITH NO INCIDENTS RECORDED IN THIS REGION. LOCAL MOOD FOLLOWING ELECTION IS GENERAL ELATION AND EXUBERANCE, WITH SOME APPREHENSION OVER POSSIBLE REACTION OF LEFTIST-ORIENTED STUDENTS AND YOUTH. END SUMMARY.

2. ELECTION ATMOSPHERE: VOTING TOOK PLACE IN ATMOSPHERE OF WELL-MODULATED ANIMATION AND GAIETY IN THESSALONIKI AND OUTLYING CHALKIDIKI VILLAGES VISITED BY CONGEN OFFICERS. CITIZENS IN THEIR SUNDAY BEST THRONGED VILLAGE STREETS TO GO TO POLLS, DISCUSS POLITICS, AND JOIN IN TRADITIONAL EVENING VOLTA THROUGH TOWN CENTERS. ANNOUNCEMENT OF PRELIMINARY RESULTS WAS FOLLOWED BY OUTPOURING OF KARAMANLIS SUPPORTERS AND CAR HORNS THROUGHOUT

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THESSALONIKI. POLLING PLACES CLOSELY GUARDED BY ARMY

PERSONNEL AND NO INCIDENTS HAVE BEEN REPORTED THUS FAR IN THIS AREA. MOST OBSERVERS CONCEDE THERE LITTLE POSSIBILITY OF ELECTORAL FRAUD.

3. LOCAL RESULTS: OF NEARLY COMPLETE AREA RETURNS, NEW DEMOCRACY REPORTED TO HAVE TAKEN 48 OF 73 NORTHERN GREEK SEATS, OR NEARLY TWO-THIRDS. AS PREDICTED, KARAMANLIS SHOWED GREATEST STRENGTH IN OUTLYING AREAS WITH VOTING FOR ND IN MANY COMMUNITIES IN THE 70TH AND 80TH PERCENTILES. VOTE IN THESSALONIKI "A" DISTRICT (A RELATIVELY WEAK ND AREA IN THE NORTH), BASED ON 422 OF 424 POLLING STATIONS REPORTING SO FAR, RESULTED IN 54.4 PERCENT FOR NEW DEMOCRACY, 17.33 PERCENT FOR CENTER UNION, 15.95 PERCENT FOR UNITED LEFT, 10.93 PERCENT FOR PASOK AND ONE PERCENT FOR EDE. THESE PERCENTAGES TRANSLATE INTO 7 SEATS FOR NEW DEMOCRACY, 2 FOR CENTER UNION, 1 OR 2 FOR UNITED LEFT, AND 1 FOR PASOK. LATTER SEAT WILL BE PREEMPTED BY PAPANDREOU AS PARTY LEADER, ALTHOUGH HE POLLED ONLY 5,474 VOTES TO 7,344 FOR LOCAL PASOK FRONT RUNNER STELIOS NESTOR. ELSEWHERE, SOME REGIONAL VARIATIONS NOTED, SUCH AS 13 PERCENT VOTE FOR EDE FROM XANTHI MOSLEMS. OTHERWISE GENERAL PECKING ORDER OF ND, CU, PASOK AND UNITED LEFT PREVAILED IN ALL OF NORTH'S 17 DISTRICTS, EXCEPT THREE WHERE PASOK LIGHTLY OVERTOOK CU, AND TWO (THESSALONIKI "A" AND KAVALA) WHERE PASOK WAS PASSED BY UNITED LEFT.

4. LAST MINUTE FACTORS: AS PREDICTED REF (A), FINAL MOMENTUM FOR KARAMANLIS CUT SUBSTANTIALLY INTO CU VOTE, ALTHOUGH EXTENT OF KARAMANLIS LANDSLIDE SURPRISED MOST OBSERVERS. AMONG FACTORS CITED HERE FOR OUTPOURING OF ND VOTES WAS STRONG APPEARANCE AND SPEECH NOVEMBER 15 BY KARAMANLIS (ATHENS 8243), RELATIVELY WEAK FINAL TV SPEECH BY MAVROS, AND "CLIMATE OF FEAR" CREATED BY PAPANDREOU RALLIES AND LOCAL ACTIVITIES OF EXTREMIST YOUTH FACTIONS. PRO-CHINESE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREECE (EKKE), FOR EXAMPLE, STAGED MARCH BY SEVERAL HUNDRED STUDENTS DISPLAYING MASSIVE RED BANNERS THROUGH DOWNTOWN STREETS HERE LATE NOVEMBER 15. OBSERVERS BELIEVE THIS AND OTHER EXTREMIST ACTIVITY ADDED TO LOCAL CONSERVATIVE VOTE.

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5. CURRENT MOOD: HOLIDAY ATMOSPHERE NOW PREVAILING IN THESSALONIKI WITH CELEBRATIONS IN PROGRESS BY NEW DEMOCRACY ALLIES. CONGEN BELIEVES THAT, UNTIL LAST MINUTE, MANY ENTERTAINED DOUBTS ABOUT INCIDENTS OR MILITARY INTERVENTION, AND ARE NOW FOR FIRST TIME CONVINCED THAT RETURN TO DEMOCRACY GENUINE. MARGIN OF VICTORY ALSO COMFORTING TO LOCAL RESIDENTS WHO PREDICTING FOUR YEARS' STABLE GOVERNMENT. ON NEGATIVE SIDE, APPREHENSION FELT

BY SOME OVER CONTINUED DIFFICULTIES AT UNIVERSITY AND
UNPREDICTABLE BACKLASH FROM FRUSTRATED STUDENT SUPPORTERS
OF PASOK AND OTHER LEFT GROUPINGS.

6. CONGEN WILL REPORT ON NEW DEPUTIES FROM NORTHERN GREECE
WHEN RETURNS CONFIRMED.
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